Rev. S. May, Leicester. Dublin August 30. 1861

My dear Mr May

Your very welcome & interesting letter reached me last Monday morning when I came into town with the Advocate for September in my pocket ready for press with the exception of an unusually small amount of corrections or alterations. So welcome did I think your letter that I had it immediately set up with the proper omissions to meet the public eye, & I got the whole paper remade up, omitting with it an article of my own & the passages from W.P's speech to which I referred. I send you the slip containing my omitted remarks — it is a unique copy & if it were Shakespeare's would be worth a mint of money in London. You inferred I would have liked W.P.'s speech — on the contrary it contained the only passages of the speeches made on that occasion which I greatly disliked. All the other speeches as far as I remember pleased me. I am greatly shocked by the conviction expressed by W.P. that England would openly or secretly help the Slave States to conquer Cuba & Mexico & to retain Slavery. If this be true, England & the British people are the basest, most hypocritical & wicked people in the world — & then what becomes of the celebration of British West Indian emancipation & the sacrifice of Twenty Millions Sterling — neither of which they or we have ever repented of & have had no reason to be sorry for? — If it be untrue, was there ever a more cruel & blacker libel against ~~any~~ a kindred nation — against whom he has none but inferential grounds for any complaint whatever. If I had been asked what man in the whole world, I an elderly man admired & honored the most for his talents & his virtues, I would have at once said Wendell Phillips and I am really grieved that he should have been induced to use such language so unprovoked by any tangible ground of complaint. Now observe it is well known to him & to you that of American visitors to England 99-100ths have been of the classes which in America are openly proslavery & who though they may slightly disguise their sentiments on this side, really have used all their influence to apologize for the system & to blacken the abolitionists. I have long thought that the value of anti slavery efforts here was more to counteract (however feebly) this baleful propagandism of slavery by American citizens, than that we could do much directly to assist you. I put it to Wendell Phillips is it wonderful that the vast flood of proslavery clergy, planters, merchants, manufacturers, literati, & monied men who as Americans have had free access to social circles which we could never enter in England, must have had a powerful influence for evil in a country where gentlemen are generally believed on their word, & where the unscrupulous falsehood of slaveholders & their abettors is not understood or allowed for. Then while your Republican government has been for the Union & not against slavery (except very incidentally) and while your newspapers except those of the abolitionists have proclaimed the same policy how are we to blame if we judge by what we see?— And again as the aim of the Government & the majority of the northern people was to restore the Union without prejudice to the guaranteed rights of the Slaveowners; how could you reasonably expect the majority of Englishmen (all but the abolitionists) who know & understand so little of your internal politics — to feel or express any great enthusiasm or sympathy for the maintenance of a proslavery union which has hitherto proved so demoralizing to the American people & so horrible for the increasing millions of American slaves. — As to the circumstances you mention respecting the 1000 fugitive slaves who have been liberated by the American army and the evident tendency of the war to abolish slavery I admit the facts most fully but I say that they are not apparent to Englishmen. They are not ~~[illegible]~~ easily gathered from American newspapers which are little read in England and until very lately they have not appeared at all in any official documents of the Northern Government. — My own observation & reading have been zealous & extensive & my testimony is the majority of the higher class & of all classes of English writers has been in favour of the North with earnestly expressed wishes for their success & for the maintenance of the Union. The opponents of slavery have thought that northern success would lead to a restoration of the old state of things — so have many even of the American abolitionists expressed themselves — and that a peaceful separation if possible would be best & cheapest for the north, ~~that~~ whilst the South would have soon to make up ~~their~~ her mind to abolition in the face of the abhorrence of the civilised world — when deprived of the support ~~they~~ she had hitherto so amply received from the Free States. My own impression is the 8 millions more or less of Southerners of British European? descent are impregnable in their swamps, woods and countless fastnesses — that they could (?not) be easily subdued

by any number of invaders of any country; and that
if they were defeated in battle, the disposition of
most Northerners would still be to patch up the
Union at any price — & thus lead to fresh disgraceful
complications & mortifications. It is true that tariffs
and cotton should not be put in comparison with slavery.
But we must take men as we find them, and people will
cry out where the shoe pinches, and as the bread of millions
in England is affected by these causes people will be influ-
enced by these considerations no matter how mean they
may be in comparison with more exalted ones. In this respect
I maintain that England is not worse if she be no better than
other nations. It is on all hands admitted that your nation
is not inferior to others in personal bravery — but facts have
shown that the your armies are not well disciplined & that
you have no able generals. My own impression is that in
real fighting provided the General be an able man & his
troops be well trained & well handled, it is little matter what
nation they belong to — and that this is the true expla-
nation of the high estimate the world has always
placed on first rate military talent. Napoleon, Wellington
Hannibal, Caesar, Alexander, & Marlborough were all men of amazing
talents, presence of mind, fertility of resources, & indomitable
resolution — and in their hands disciplined troops were
able for any thing. The most intelligent & clearest headed
men I know express themselves (as I feel) *astonished* at the
extent & intensity of American irritation against England
& they ask what have we done that we could help doing?
You agree that our Government have acted as they ought to
do & so think I. As to the proslavery course of some papers,
their bad teachers & their venal or unprincipled writers & not
the nation of 25 millions are to be justly blamed. A friend
writes to me from Paris — an American — who severely rates the
whole nation down as utterly proslavery & unprincipled — &
this I cannot in the least discern. — Mr McKim writes to
me to send him in addition to your order 35 more of
John Brown. I am glad of this for Mrs B's sake. It makes no
difference to me personally. I think it better to add the
photograph which costs only 3d each & is a great addition
to the book. The Athenaeum which I have long known to
be proslavery has [illegible] a most depreciatory notice, ridiculing